



Irish Traveller Movement in Britain

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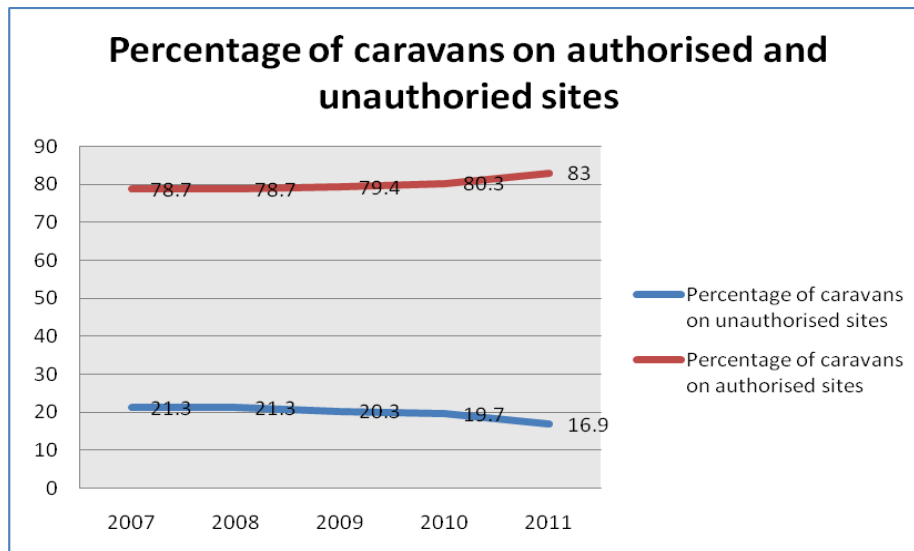
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July 2011

Planning for Gypsies and Travellers: If it's not broken don't fix it, but you can improve on it!

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles has consistently claimed that the previous Government's Gypsy and Traveller planning circular hasn't worked.¹

However, new figures from his own department indicate he is replacing the circular with 'light touch guidance' just when it is making a difference. According to the latest results from the twice yearly caravan count, the proportion of Gypsy and Traveller caravans without planning permission – a critical indicator – is now falling quite quickly. It was 21.3% in January 2007, 19.7% in January 2010, but 16.9% in January 2011.² This is because of a significant increase in privately owned Gypsy and Traveller sites with planning permission, and in particular the numbers granted permission on appeal in the light of Circular 1/06.³



Eric Pickles 'light touch guidance' will leave it up to local Councils to decide what provision is needed and risks making it much harder for Gypsies and Travellers to gain planning permission and win appeals. Pickles new guidance will lead to an increase in unauthorised sites, Traveller homelessness, evictions and community tensions. This comes at a time when the existing planning guidance (Circular 1/06) is leading to a reduction in unauthorised sites and an increase in authorised ones.

¹ See for instance the Ministerial forward to *Planning for traveller sites*, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1886164.pdf>

² Department for Communities and Local Government, January 2011 *Caravan Count* <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1932949.pdf>

³ Richardson, J, 2011, *The Impact of Planning Circular 1/06 on Gypsies and Travellers in England*